

## Limitations

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In order to address concerns about the reliability and validity of data included in this assessment, it is important that the limitations of the assessment design and methodology be made clear. The following are the primary limitations noted by the CDC and participating NRMOs:

- ❖ The samples were drawn from existing contacts with the participating NRMOs. Therefore, the sample does not include CBOs that have not had contact with NRMOs and might need technical assistance and training the most. Focus group participants and key informants were chosen by convenience sampling — they were not randomized.
- ❖ There were no uniform sampling or information-gathering techniques among the NRMOs. Aside from the 12 core questions, the assessment lacks uniformity of questions for quantitative analysis. Further, there was no uniform qualitative analyses, as each NRMO did its own.
- ❖ Mail-in surveys have inherent limitations, including low, potentially unrepresentative, response rates. The CBOs had no strong incentive to respond and some CBOs are feeling over-surveyed from similar assessments. The capacity of the NRMOs to follow-up on the questionnaires and encourage response was limited by their other commitments. This, in turn, may have lowered the response rates.
- ❖ While the assessment aimed to gather information about CBOs targeting different racial/ethnic minorities, there exists diversity within each target population, which was not taken into account.
- ❖ The standardized core questions asked about programs in 1996, so the data may already be outdated.
- ❖ Many of the questions in the core areas, such as those regarding behavioral science and epidemiologic information, required a sophistication in HIV prevention programs that is not reflective of actual CBO programs and/or capacity in order to understand and properly answer the questions.
- ❖ There was no validation process of survey responses. Consequently, variations may be largely due to a high rate of CBO staff turnover. The staff members filling out the surveys may not know the programmatic history of the CBO.
- ❖ The assessment period was brief and time constraints may have affected the response rate.
- ❖ The focus of the study changed during the course of the project. This process took time away from other components of the study.
- ❖ The pilot testing was done on a sample that was too small to be representative or to indicate where significant changes to the instrument were necessary.